

Attachment H

Example of a Public Involvement Plan

Note: The Public Involvement Plan should address a strategy to involve persons with disabilities throughout the planning process.

Brantley and Avalon Reservoirs

Resource Management Plan

Public Involvement Plan

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Submitted to:

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Public Involvement Plan

Introduction

During the past decade, Federal and State agencies have come to recognize the importance of public participation in developing Resource Management Plans (RMPs) and guidelines. A properly organized public participation program that is executed early in a planning process results in a well-informed public and better cooperation between the public and government agencies. Involving the public early in the process ensures a sense of responsibility and, thus, their confidence in the outcome of resource management decisions. Although public involvement may initially require additional effort on the part of the agency, it ultimately saves both time and money and strengthens the relationship between the public and government agencies.

The purposes of public involvement are to inform the public and solicit public response regarding their needs, values, and evaluations of proposed solutions. Public involvement programs are designed not only to meet State and Federal regulations, but also to include interested individuals, organizations, agencies, and governmental entities in the decisionmaking process. Techniques used for public involvement include interviews, workshops, advisory committees, informational brochures, surveys, and public hearings. The relative success of public involvement techniques and the public involvement program as a whole is indicated by how well informed the public is and by how much the public has contributed to making an environmentally sound, feasible decision that is supported by a significant segment of the public.

The preparation of an RMP for New Mexico's Brantley and Avalon Reservoirs will require extensive public involvement activities throughout the planning process. Because the preparation of an RMP is a Federal action that requires compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the public involvement process will serve both the RMP and NEPA document. This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) documents the general methods to be used to contact and solicit comments from interested parties. The PIP is designed to guide and structure all activities in an effort to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and information.

Public Involvement Plan Components

The BIO/WEST Project Team (Project Team) will use several public involvement methods to gain insight into the concerns of those entities potentially affected by provisions of the Brantley and Avalon Reservoirs RMP. Methods of soliciting public input will include public workshops, newsletters, media contact, and formation of a Resource Management Planning Work Group. The public involvement process will offer the public and various interest groups information about the project and its potential impacts and will solicit their ideas and comments regarding the different issues. All correspondence with the general

public and with the media, including newsletters, will be coordinated with, and approved by, the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation's) Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) for the project.

Newsletters

Information regarding the different aspects and phases of the project will be published in a series of newsletters to be distributed to the public. The Project Team will develop and maintain a project mailing list of individuals, agency personnel, and user group representatives who will receive the newsletters throughout the project. The Project Team anticipates producing a total of six newsletters for the Brantley and Avalon Reservoirs RMP project. A brief description of each newsletter is provided below.

- P **Newsletter #1: Spring 1998.** The first newsletter will introduce the project and key project personnel, establish a time frame for completion of the project, provide a description of public involvement activities, announce public workshops, identify preliminary issues, and request that individuals fill out a voluntary mail-in response form.
- P **Newsletter #2: Summer 1998.** The second newsletter will discuss the planning process to date, present the results of the mail-in response form, present the results of the first public workshop, present the participants of the planning work group, and discuss future activities.
- P **Newsletter #3: Fall 1998.** This newsletter will present the problem statement, project goals and objectives, and project planning criteria.
- P **Newsletter #4: Winter 1998/1999.** The fourth newsletter will summarize the proposed management alternatives, request comments regarding the alternatives, and establish the dates and locations of the second public workshop.
- P **Newsletter #5: Summer 1999.** This newsletter will discuss the status of the NEPA document and provide information on how individuals might comment on the document's contents.
- P **Newsletter #6: Winter 1999/2000.** The sixth newsletter will present the final preferred RMP alternative to the public.

Other newsletters may be prepared on an as-needed basis.

Public Workshops

Public workshops will be conducted three times during the planning process. The workshops will be held in Carlsbad, New Mexico, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The workshops will be designed to obtain public input into the planning process and, as the project proceeds, share results. These public workshops will be “open house” informational meetings during which individuals are free to participate as they please. Several Project Team members, including the Project Leader, the Public Involvement Specialist, and Reclamation personnel will be available to answer questions that participants may have.

The first workshop will be designed in a “scoping” format to identify and address the issues, concerns, and opportunities that are inherent to the project. Maps and photographs of the project area will be available. A list of issues will be provided to inform the public of planning constraints. Members of the public will be asked to comment on these issues and provide any additional issues or concerns they may have. The first workshop is scheduled for July 1998.

The second public workshop is scheduled for December 1998 and will focus on presenting the full range of project alternatives. Project alternatives will be graphically presented on a project area base map, and summaries of the major components of each will be available for review. The third and final workshop, scheduled for September 1999, will present the final preferred alternative. Additional information regarding the second and third public workshops will be included in future newsletters.

Planning Work Group

The Planning Work Group is a key element for the successful completion of the Brantley and Avalon Reservoirs RMP project. The Planning Work Group will include local, State, and Federal Government agency representatives, user group representatives, local landowners, and resource-dependent organization representatives who have a significant interest in the future management and use of the reservoirs. The purpose of the group will be to facilitate decisionmaking between groups and individuals with diverse interests and to work toward a consensus for a preferred plan. Members for the Planning Work Group will be solicited from interviews, public meetings, and recommendations.

The Planning Work Group will help identify issues, develop goals and objectives, and formulate a problem statement. In addition, the Planning Work Group will probably discuss the resource inventory and analysis results, formulate a full range of alternatives,

and select a preferred plan. Up to six meetings between the Project Team and the Planning Work Group may be necessary. These meetings will be open to the general public and advertised in local media.

Formation of the Planning Work Group will be achieved primarily by direct discussion with representatives of those organizations and agencies directly involved with the RMP project (see the list below). The Planning Work Group will be limited to individuals or group representatives with a significant interest in the project.

Preliminary Planning Work Group

- P Carlsbad Irrigation District
- P City of Carlsbad
- P Department of the Interior, Office of Environmental Affairs and Compliance
- P Eddy County
- P Environmental Organizations
- P General Public/Reservoir Users
- P Local Merchants
- P Natural Resources Conservation Service
- P New Mexico Environment Department, Surface Water Quality Bureau
- P New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office
- P New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission
- P New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
- P New Mexico State Engineer
- P New Mexico State Park and Recreation Division
- P Pecos River Compact Commission
- P U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- P U.S. Bureau of Land Management
- P U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- P U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- P Grazing Permittees
- P New Mexico Oil and Gas Association

Media

Coordination with the media will be handled primarily by the Project Team with approval by the COTR. Anticipated media exposure for the Brantley and Avalon Reservoirs RMP project includes local newspapers (print) and radio. Print publicity will be in the form of paid public notices to guarantee adequate exposure. News releases will be made to *The*

Carlsbad Current Argus, *The Artesia Daily Press*, and *The Albuquerque Daily Press* newspapers. Radio notices will be in the form of public service announcements. All media correspondence will be approved by the COTR prior to release.

Agency/Government Coordination

The Project Team proposes to contact and interview government agencies, special interest groups, and local governments to discuss the issues or land use problems that need to be addressed in the Brantley and Avalon Reservoirs RMP. Government agencies include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the New Mexico State Engineer, the New Mexico Park and Recreation Division, the New Mexico Environment Department, the New Mexico Highway Department, the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission, the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office, Eddy County, and the City of Carlsbad. Special interests include irrigation districts, recreation interests, and environmental interests. It may be necessary to coordinate one-on-one with certain groups initially but not beyond simple introductory meetings and requests for participation; this will prevent conflicts due to perceived favoritism from the general public and potential legal problems. Private meetings will be discouraged.

Conclusions

Through the implementation of this PIP, the Project Team will encourage and provide all interested publics and agency representatives with the opportunity to comment on the Brantley and Avalon Reservoirs RMP project. The public involvement activities have been structured to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and information. As such, this PIP will:

- P Provide meaningful public participation and informed decisionmaking
- P Ensure an open and visible planning process
- P Identify and document the interests, concerns, and desires of the various interested agencies and publics
- P Attempt to reach a consensus on the proposed management plan and develop solutions to key resource issues, concerns, and management policies